1: Ingrams G-5 (1934-35)1936 MM2 Hadhramaut MM2

bricks. The cost of building the house in which we stayed in Tarim was $60,000. The exterior of these houses is decorated with blue, green, yellow, and pink, which is not at all unattractive. Interiors are fitted with every up-to-date contrivance, electric light and fans, telephones, ice-plants, and European modern conveniences in the bathrooms, wash-basins with running water and shower-baths. Whereas in Du'an and Shibam there is scarcely a chair to be found, these houses are replete with European furniture, albeit some of a rather florid style. Large and comfortable chairs and sofas decorate the drawing-rooms, and there are English carpets, masses of gilt mirrors, chandeliers and glass cupboards full of marmalade dishes, egg-cups and so on. Living in such houses as these one is struck at every moment with the reflection that there is hardly a thing in the house that has not had to be transported on camel-back over the mountains for six days.

The principal structural detail that the wealthy Seiyids of Tarim and Seiyun have to contend with in their building operations is the difficulty of procuring long enough timber. The *'elb* or *sidr* tree grows to no great height, and although we found *'ariata* trees (*Conocarpus erectus*, Jacq.) growing to 50 feet or more in height some days' journey down the Wadi Maseila, they cannot be transported by camels. The difficulty is being surmounted to some extent by experiments in the making of reinforced concrete pillars of which I saw two in construction at Seiyun. All the work is done by local labour, the travelled Seiyids training their masons. The interior walls of these houses, apart from elaborate decorations such as gold crowns and coloured flowers, are covered with a lime plaster polished with smooth pieces of flint till it resembles marble.

Shibam is remarkable for the height of its houses. The town, which is in the shape of a capital D, contains in a small area 500 houses built on a slight eminence in the Wadi. From a short distance the whole town appears to be one enormous brown mud built construction with a whitewashed top storey and roof. There is no further building room in the town and the only way to have a new house is to buy an old one, knock it down, and rebuild. By general consent, houses in Shibam are not now to be built more than six storeys high in order to avoid overlooking. The only important existing exception to this rule is the Government palace, which is a storey or two higher, but which is in such a position that it overlooks very little. On the top of the six storeys the builder may however erect a roofless seventh which gives him a walled-in roof terrace. The building of this type of house which, when completed, will be 64 *dhirras* or 96 feet high, will cost more than 20,000 dollars. Bigger houses are constructed of two or more houses built together. The life of a house is said to be 200 to 250 years, but the age it reaches depends on the privies being kept dry and cleaned out regularly. If this is not done, the damp saps the lower part of the clay walls and causes splits, necessitating demolition.

?: Sturler-Raemaekers T-3 (1950-51) 1963 MM2 Hadhramaut MM2

TOWNS AND ARCHITECTURE OF THE HADHRAMAUT

By MRS. M. DE STURLER-RAEMAEKERS

Report of a lecture illustrated by a film delivered to the Society on Thursday, May 21, 1953, Mr. W. H. Ingrams, C.M.G., O.B.E., in the chair.

The CHAIRMAN: As you can well imagine, it is a great pleasure to me to take the chair this afternoon for Mrs. Sturler-Raemaekers, because I have spent ten years in the country which she is about to describe. Unfortunately, ever since I left it in 1944 time has done nothing but take me somewhere else in the world. I have just returned from a tour of the United States, Mexico, Central America and the West Indies. Most of my time seems to be taken up in Africa and it is difficult to get an opportunity of looking again at the Hadhramaut. Hence it is a great pleasure to be able to see Mrs. Sturler-Raemaekers' slides and to hear her account this afternoon.

I expect that in some respects at least the architecture of the Hadhramaut is familiar to many of you through Freya Stark's books, perhaps particularly the illustrations in her book *Seen in the Hadhramaut*; also Mr. Osbert Lankaster, an architect who many may know better as a cartoonist, wrote an article on the architecture of the Hadhramaut some years ago which appeared, I believe, in the *Architectural Journal*.

There is a very long tradition of architecture in the Hadhramaut. One wonders how long this wonderful working in mud has gone on. In ancient days the ancient Hadhraumauti used to go in for monumental stone masonry on a large scale. I remember seeing huge stones lying on the old Hadhramauti ruins and being told by the local people that the stones had been transported to the early buildings by the Adites, who were formerly giants. Hadhraumaut is a country which has always recognized the Book of Genesis, that there were giants in the land in those days.

Mrs. Sturler-Raemaekers was born in Holland and came to England as a child, first, during the first World War. Here she was educated, so we can at least claim part of her. Then she went to France and later came back to England to study architecture for three years at the Architectural Association. She took her degree in Brussels and practised there. Then she travelled a good deal in Europe. She returned to England again at the outbreak of the recent World War and has been here ever since except for her travelling. In 1948 Mrs. Sturler-Raemaekers thought she would go further afield and, fortunately for us and for Arabia, she chose to go there, but before doing so she took the precaution of studying Arabic for two years at London University.

Mrs. Sturler-Raemaekers spent ten months in the Hadhramaut in 1950-51 and was there again in 1952 for five months. She has told me, very modestly, that that is a very inadequate time in which to study the Hadhramaut, but I think we shall discover that she found out a great deal of much interest while she was there.

MY experience of the Middle East is, as you have heard, somewhat brief, being only three years. I therefore feel a little embarrassed when speaking before a gathering in which there may be many who have probably travelled there for much longer periods. I trust they will show some indulgence towards anything I may say which may not be either new or just as they saw it; I have at least specialized knowledge in one subject which took me there, and that is architecture. I went to study the buildings of Hadhramaut and make measured drawings of them. I do not intend to give a technical discourse on exactly how the buildings are constructed or how the bricks are made, because I do not think that this is

133 a second miracle happens. There is a cleft in the great basalt plateau and
311 a beautiful green valley opens abruptly in the flat tableland—a valley running from east to west, joining the sea some 150 miles further on. This is a fertile valley with gardens and palm groves, millet fields and white palaces. An underground river continually provides water for the wells and the little irrigation channels. There are crops up to three times per year. In this lovely setting very civilized and well-dressed townsfolk live in large mud-built towns on the valley cliff sides. Recently they have laid aside their arms and ceased their blood feuds and tribal wars which raged from town to town, from tribe to tribe, from family to family. With the aid of the British adviser they have established law and order and made their foreign trade, which is their livelihood, flourish unhindered.

172 When we go back into history to find out where this miracle has sprung
341 from, we discover that there were the old Sabean and Hymyaritic civilizations of 1,000 or 2,000 years B.C., of which Mr. Ingrams spoke. Perhaps it started with the Minean Empire, on the eastern border of Yemen, and its capital, Ma'in. Later came the Sabeans with their capital a little south, at Marib; followed by the Katabaneans, whose centre, Timna, was at the south-eastern corner of the great desert. And lastly, perhaps, the Hadhramis, whose early capital may have been the much disputed Shabwa. These people built in stone, and their buildings were several storeys high and of very fine dry masonry. Many are the ruins covering the western territory between Aden and Hadhramaut and to the north in Yemen. But also in Hadhramaut itself, further east, there are vestiges of towns and temples, in the main valley and the side valleys; great plans of garrison cities, and remains of castle and palace walls in beautifully executed stonework, all erected perhaps some 2,000 years ago.

341 With such a tradition it is not surprising that something is still found
333 in the present day, and although the Hadhramis have not continued the stone masonry and have turned mainly to sun-dried mud bricks, their achievements are of remarkable interest.

101 Reviewing the various groups of the population, there are the bedouin
342 who still live by camel transport, the sand bedouin of the desert who live in simple black camelhair tents, and the bedouin mountain tribesmen who live on the arid plateaux. The latter are rugged and tough, like the country round them. Their life is hard; it is scorching hot without any shade in the day, bitterly cold at night at 6,000 feet. They still build their low windowless huts with brushwood roofs with the stones of the plateaux in dry walling. They carry on in their primitive way the stone tradition which has been lost elsewhere in the eastern area.

361 The next class of inhabitants we meet are the remote valley bedouin,
311 who live in rather better circumstances. They do have a little grazing,
342 cultivate a little land where they grow millet called dharrah and a sort of little cucumber-tomato called faguws. They live in the earthen beds of long-dried-up rivers that have a flood from the hills about once a year. They have grown lazy like everyone else, and they build their little castles
342 of mud bricks with a base of rough stones from the river-bed. A passage down the centre leads from the entrance door with almost windowless rooms for storage either side to a stair leading to a sheltered roof terrace.

7: Stuiler-Raemaekers T-3 (1950-51) 1953 MM2 Hadhramaut MM2

Now they cover the building in white plaster all over, and the charming ornamentation in darts and trefoils is lost.

The oldest building in Shibam, the castle, which may be anything from 80 to 150 years old, still shows this decoration in horizontal bands of white round the windows. It seems an old bedouin tradition, for I have found it in remote bedouin villages. So all these old, charming and vigorous forms—dart motifs, broad bands, crenellated terraces, carved and nail-studded doors and graceful mucharabias for the ladies to look down into the street from the high terraces—are being abandoned. The present-day Hadhrami thinks them old-fashioned and copies the Indian and pseudo-Classic styles he has seen in Java and Singapore. Niches are filled in; and instead of the flat, low relief white ornaments (all shapes receding because the mud crumbles and the yearly rainfalls wash them away) we now find entablatures, pediments, balusters and pilasters, designed for much more lasting materials, like stone, and which here soon become shabby.

Shibam, the old-fashioned, has only just begun to suffer from this. Going, also, is one of the amenities of the Arab house: the coffee corner. In almost every room and terrace there was a little dais in a cool and shaded corner by a window where the master or mistress sat to make coffee for the guests. In the walls behind the dais there were niches specially shaped to take the pestle and mortar, the charcoal tin, the cups, and a small cupboard to lock away the precious ingredients—coffee, ginger and sugar. On the window-sill there was often a tall jar for the water and a runnel for waste water to flow away. Instead of these we now find the tea ceremony round the samovar in the middle of the floor, the little dais being broken away.

But we now move to the most fashionable of the Hadhramaut towns—to Saiywun and Terim and the many surrounding small towns. Here one finds a different type of people. There are many merchants too, but here we find another leading class, also great landowners in Java and Singapore. These are Sayyids, members of the eighty holy families, descendants of Mohammed, who live in these towns beside the lower classes. They have been the spiritual and temporal lords of the country for centuries. They have authority in matters of justice and civil affairs, and they are believed to have healing gifts. Until recently they were the undisputed rulers of the country. Now their power wanes before more democratic forms.

These people live in shining white palaces in the manner of *grands seigneurs*. They wear long white silk coats or the Indian silk longie and pastel-shaded shirts. The ladies, up till recently, wore heavy satin embroidered and sequin-covered kimono-like gowns, bunched into a low silver belt round the hips. Now these are forbidden as they cannot be washed. They wear their hair in hundreds of fine plaits. Up to the age of eight little girls may show face and hair, then they cover hair and neck with a close-fitting shawl and at twelve they go into purdah completely.

Their houses are built in a solid square block without inner courtyard and with windows on all four sides. Even the old streets are fairly wide in these towns that lie in the foothills. The more modern houses are surrounded by a walled garden. They are completely divided into two, one

24:Meulen and Wissmann T-3 (1931)1932 MM2 Hadhramaut MM2

terrace of ʿIzz ed-Dīn, with the moon-lit tops of the palm-trees all around and the star-lit sky of Arabia above, are unforgettable.

On May 25th the Sultan invites us to a motor drive through the gardens of Sēwūn. The two cars pass slowly between mud walls enclosing gardens; the white summer residences in the midst of palm-trees are hidden from the gaze of the inquisitive. Then, in order to get a good view of beautiful Sēwūn, we were taken as far as the mountain-wall, where we climbed a hill on the slopes of the rock débris. The city, which lies at the foot of the mountain-wall, gleams white and thus gives a prosperous impression. On the highest point stands, wide and tall, the palace of the Sultan, one of the best examples of Ḥaḍramī palace architecture that we came across. Only the roof-terraces, with the rooms built upon them, are entirely white. The rest of the buildings has two white bands on a line with the windows, whilst the ventilation openings are framed in white. The corners of the edifice, which is long and rectangular, are fortified by round turrets. The heavy mud walls are thinner above than below and, consequently, the outer walls are not perpendicular, but slope inwards, which strengthens the impression of power and beauty in the building. The palace rises up from walled-in terraces, on which are gatehouses, powder magazines, stables and soldiers' quarters. At a little distance lies the graceful palace, entirely white, but somewhat smaller, of the Sultan of Terīm.

The cemetery is situated nearly in the centre of the town and has five graves of *walīs* with graceful *qubbas* in their honour. Several white minarets rise out of the sea of houses of the city, reminding us that Sēwūn was once famous as a seat of religion and learning. Schools were habitually connected with the mosques and that is still the case with their scanty remnants. Surrounding the city is a wide border of palm-groves, with the white of summer residences dotting it here and there. Those of the es-Saqqāf family are noticeable for their number and their size.

6:Gt. Brit., Colonial Office G-3 (1948) 1950 MM1 Aden
Hadhramaut MM2

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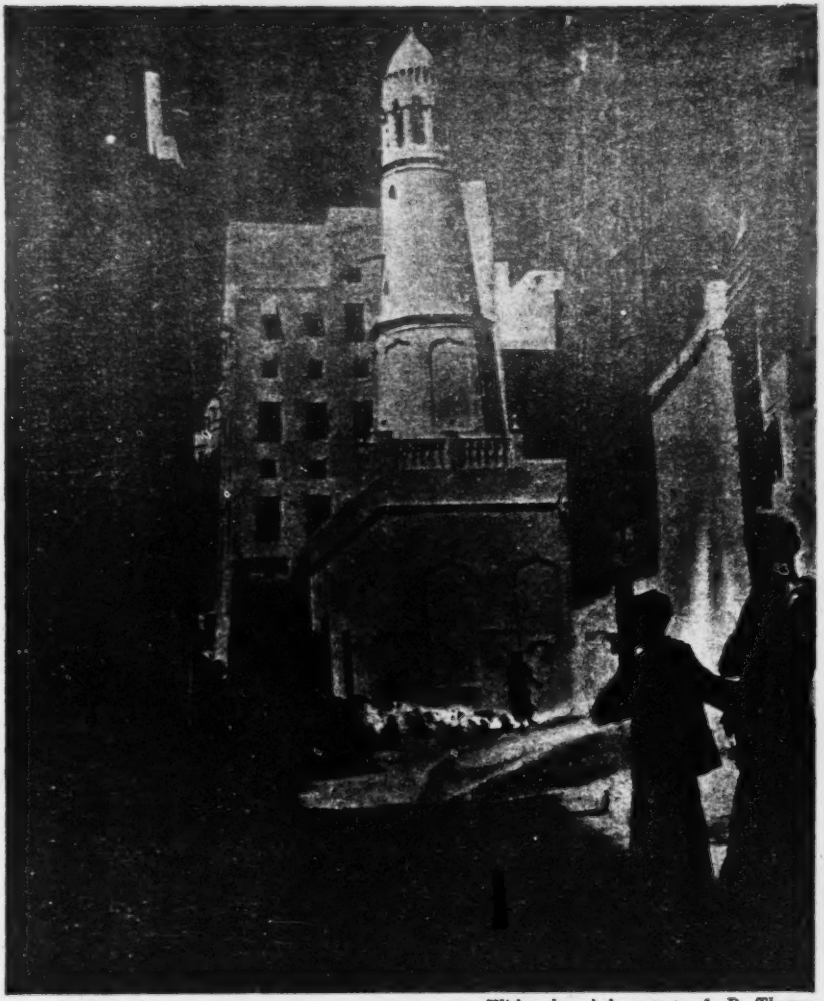

With acknowledgments to A. R. Thomas

SHIBAM, ADEN PROTECTORATE

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